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9 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
10 EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

11 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

12 Plaintiff,

13 vs.

14 \$152,541.00 U.S. CURRENCY,
15 \$6,710.87 SALE PROCEEDS,
16 FIREARMS, AMMUNITION AND
17 ACCESSORIES,

18 Defendants.

VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR
FORFEITURE *IN REM*

19 Plaintiff, United States of America, by its attorneys, Vanessa R. Waldref,
20 United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, and Brian M. Donovan,
21 Assistant U.S. Attorney, brings this complaint and alleges as follows in accordance
22 with Supplemental Rule G(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure:
23

24 I. NATURE OF THE ACTION

25 1. This is an action to forfeit and condemn to the use and benefit of the
26 United States of America the above-captioned Defendant property seized by the
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1 Federal Bureau of Investigation for violations of Title II of the Controlled Substances
2 Act, 21 U.S.C. § 801 et seq.

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4 II. THE DEFENDANT(S) IN REM

5 2. The Defendant property consists of the following property:

6 - \$152,641.00 U.S. currency seized by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on or
7 about December 28, 2022, pursuant to the execution of a Federal Search and
8 Seizure Warrant;

9 - a Pietro Beretta, model 92, nine-millimeter pistol, bearing serial number
10 A216636Z.

11 - Any and all seized ammunition and accessories, including, but not limited to:

- 12 - a holster with “EEZ” initials and (10) rounds of 9mm ammunition
13 - multiple rounds of misc. ammunition, a 7.62 banana magazine and
14 - a 9mm magazine
15 - 26 rounds of 9mm ammunition and a magazine.

16 - \$6,710.87 in net proceeds from the sale of 501 Stuart Street, Moxee,
17 Washington, seized on or about May 19, 2023, from Valley Title Guarantee,
18 Inc., Escrow File # 257284, pursuant to the execution of a federal seizure
warrant

19 Hereafter the “Defendant Property”

20
21 III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

22 3. Plaintiff brings this action *in rem* in its own right to forfeit and condemn
23 the Defendant property. This Court has jurisdiction over an action commenced by the
24 United States under 28 U.S.C. § 1345, and over an action for forfeiture under 28
25 U.S.C. § 1355(a). This Court has *in rem* jurisdiction over the Defendant property
26 under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(b).
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1 4. Upon the filing of this complaint, Plaintiff requests that the Court issue
2 an arrest warrant *in rem* pursuant to Supplemental Rule G(3)(b), which Plaintiff will
3 execute upon the property pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1355(d) and Supplemental Rule
4 G(3)(c).
5

6 5. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1355(b)(1),
7 because the acts or omissions giving rise to the forfeiture occurred in this district.
8

9 IV. BASIS FOR FORFEITURE

10 6. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in
11 Paragraphs 1 through 5 above.
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13 7. The Defendant property is liable to condemnation and forfeiture to the
14 United States for its use, in accordance with the provisions of 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6),
15 because it constitutes: 1) money, negotiable instruments, securities and other things
16 of value furnished and intended to be furnished in exchange for a controlled substance
17 in violation of the Controlled Substances Act; 2) proceeds traceable to such an
18 exchange; and/or 3) money, negotiable instruments, and securities used and intended
19 to be used to facilitate a violation of the Controlled Substances Act; and/or in
20 accordance with the provisions of 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(11), because it is a firearm used
21 or intended to be used to facilitate the transportation, sale, receipt, possession, or
22 concealment of property described in 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(1) or (2) and any proceeds
23 traceable to such property.
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V. FACTS

8. On April 14, 2022, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) received information from a Confidential Human Source (“CHS”) regarding a male, “Michoacano,” who sells large amounts of illegal narcotics including pills, methamphetamine, and cocaine.

9. The CHS advised that “Michoacano” recently received a shipment of 80,000 fentanyl pills, 75 pounds of methamphetamine, and a few kilograms of cocaine.

10. On April 18, 2022, the CHS set up a meeting with “Michoacano.” Prior to the meeting and for each controlled buy that followed, the CHS was searched and wired with a concealed visual and audio recording device. During this meeting, a records check was conducted on the 2005 Ford F-150 “Michoacano” arrived in. The records check showed the 2005 Ford F-150 was registered to Eliseo Equihua Zamora, with a listed address of 2211 Stone Road, Yakima, WA. The CHS was later shown a photograph of Zamora, and the CHS identified the individual in the photograph as “Michoacano.”

11. After the meeting with Zamora, the CHS stated they observed approximately three pounds of methamphetamine and a large quantity of fentanyl pills inside the 2005 Ford F-150, and that Zamora would sell no less than a half a pound of methamphetamine to them at a time.

1 12. In April and June of 2022, FBI conducted two controlled buys of
2 methamphetamine and fentanyl pills from Zamora using the CHS. FBI purchased a
3 total of approximately a pound of methamphetamine and approximately 100 fentanyl
4 pills for \$2,800.00 in buy funds of US Currency.
5

6 13. On June 6, 2022, the CHS stated they observed Zamora on two occasions
7 with what appeared to be a black semi-automatic handgun, possibly a .45 caliber
8 Smith and Wesson, with a silencer. Also, during the CHS's interactions with Zamora,
9 the CHS stated Zamora bragged about selling 87,000 pink in color fentanyl pills
10 within two days of receiving a shipment.
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13 14. When the CHS interacted with Zamora in October 2022, the CHS stated
14 that Zamora again bragged about recently receiving a new shipment of 72 pounds of
15 methamphetamine, fentanyl laced pills, and fentanyl power. Zamora also mentioned
16 he acquired a pill press to make methamphetamine pills to grow his operation. Lastly,
17 the CHS advised that he/she was aware that Zamora had at least two firearms: a
18 handgun, and a long rifle.
19
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21 15. On November 17, 2022, FBI requested the CHS to conduct its third
22 controlled purchase with Zamora for a pound of methamphetamine and fentanyl pills.
23 The CHS contacted Zamora who agreed to the transaction and directed a meet up
24 location.
25

26 16. The CHS traveled and arrived at the predetermined meet up location and
27 contacted Zamora via cellular phone who stated that he would be there soon. Not long
28

1 after, a silver Lexus appeared, and when the CHS entered an unidentified male and
2 female were inside, instead of Zamora. The unknown male provided the CHS with a
3 pound of methamphetamine and approximately 300 fentanyl laced pills in exchange
4 for \$3,100.00 in US Currency.

6 17. On December 14, 2022, a Task Force Officer contacted the CHS for a status
7 update regarding Zamora. The CHS stated Zamora was going hard selling, which can
8 reasonably be believed to mean was selling large quantities of illegal controlled
9 substance. In addition, on December 22, 2022 the CHS advised that Zamora inquired
10 if the CHS was available to start selling fentanyl laced pills for him again.

13 Search of Subject Residence and Seizure

14 18. Using fee-for-service databases, law enforcement was provided the
15 address of 501 Stuart Street, Moxee, WA to be associated with Zamora.

17 19. In November 2022, Task Force officers traveled to the Stuart Street
18 residence and observed the 2005 Ford F-150 and Zamora's blue Chevrolet Colorado
19 parked in the driveway. These same vehicles were consistently observed at the Stone
20 Road residence, where the 2005 Ford F-150 was registered.

22 20. Eliseo Equihua-Zamora and his wife, Jasmine C. Zamora, purchased the
23 Stuart Street residence from Hayden Homes, LLC, a real estate development
24 company, on or about May 24, 2022 for \$370,636.

26 21. It appears Zamora and his wife used a down payment of approximately
27 \$18,000 and obtained a home loan from American Pacific Mortgage Corporation for
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1 \$352,104.00 to purchase the Stuart Street residence. The purchase of the Stuart Street
2 residence was during the period of the FBI's investigation into Zamora, which began
3 in April 2022. In addition, the residence is a newly constructed home which may
4 reasonably explain Zamora not moving into the house until November 2022.
5

6 22. A review of employment records from the Washington State
7 Employment Security Department in December 2022, provided no employment
8 records for Zamora since 2013. Even with co-owner Jasmine Chavez Equihua
9 reporting an approximate income of \$4,500 in the first quarter of 2022, there is no
10 indication from reliable sources that Zamora or his wife had legitimate income
11 available to fund the purchase of the Stuart Street residence at the time they obtained
12 the loan and made the down payment.
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16 23. On December 28, 2022, the FBI executed a federal search warrant on the
17 Stuart Street residence with both Zamora and Jasmine Equihua present and collected
18 the following items:
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- 20 • Holstered Beretta 9MM semi-auto handgun with a loaded magazine
21 inserted. No round was in the chamber. A holster with the initials EEZ.
22 All located in the left dresser of the master bedroom.
23
- 24 • Bulk US currency (approximately \$10,041). Located in the left dresser of
25 the master bedroom.
26
- 27 • Bulk US currency (approximately \$1,600). Located in the right dresser of
28 the master bedroom.

- 1 • Bulk US currency (approximately \$10,000). Located on the top shelf of
- 2 one of the master bedroom closets.
- 3
- 4 • Marshall's bag with clear baggies containing white crystalline substance.
- 5 Located in the attic space of over the garage under insulation.
- 6
- 7 • Hobby Lobby bag with clear baggies containing white crystalline
- 8 substance. Located in the attic space of over the garage under insulation.
- 9
- 10 • Bulk US currency in red, white, and green speaker box (approximately
- 11 \$131,000). Located in a hole in the ground on the north exterior of the
- 12 house.
- 13
- 14 • (3) plastic bags in plastic bin with various pills and white crystalline
- 15 substance. Located in a hole in the ground on the south exterior of the
- 16 house.
- 17
- 18 • Pink and blue pills in clear bags. Located in a hole in the ground on the
- 19 north exterior of the house.
- 20
- 21 • Ammunition and magazines. Located in a bin near the north wall of the
- 22 garage.
- 23
- 24 • Samsung cellular phone w/ pink case. Located on the right dresser in the
- 25 master bedroom.
- 26
- 27 • TCL phone w/ black case. Located on left side of the bed on the floor.
- 28 • Iphone. Located on left side of the bed on the floor.



24. Despite having no verifiable legitimate income (in the case of Zamora) and very little legitimate income (in the case of Jasmine), the FBI seized over \$152,641.00 in US Currency¹ from the Stuart Street residence.

25. It is reasonable, therefore, to believe that Zamora was bringing in income by selling large quantities of illegal narcotics, and the currency recovered during the seizure was proceeds from that illegal activity. This is reinforced by Zamora's statements to the CHS about Zamora's ability to promptly sell large quantities of illegal narcotics, his investment in a pill presser to further his operation, and his inquiry for the CHS's help in selling fentanyl laced pills. As such, the currency, firearm, and ammunition seized from the Stuart Street residence constitutes proceeds

¹ The United States also seized a counterfeit \$100 bill from Zamora's residence.

1 derived from violations of 21 U.S.C. § 841 and/or represents property facilitating
2 violations of 21 U.S.C. § 841 and is therefore subject to forfeiture pursuant to 21
3 U.S.C. § 881.
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5 26. On January 10, 2023, Zamora was indicted on one count of Possession
6 with Intent to Distribute 50 Grams of More of Actual (pure) Methamphetamine, in
7 violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(A)(viii), one count of Possession with Intent
8 to Distribute 400 Grams or More of Fentanyl, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1),
9 (b)(1)(A)(vi), and one count of Possession of a Firearm in Furtherance of a Drug
10 Trafficking Crime, in violation on 18 U.S.C. § 924(c)(1)(A)(i). *United States v. Eliseo*
11 *Equihua-Zamora*, Case No. 1:23-CR-2004-SAB, ECF No. 21.
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14 27. On March 14, 2023, a Superseding Indictment was filed charging Zamora
15 with Count 1, Possession with Intent to Distribute 50 Grams or More of Actual (pure)
16 Methamphetamine, in violation of 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(A)(viii), and Count 2,
17 Possession with Intent to Distribute 400 Grams or More of Fentanyl, in violation of 21
18 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), (b)(1)(A)(vi), a Class A felony. *United States v. Eliseo Equihua-*
19 *Zamora*, Case No. 1:23-CR-2004-SAB, ECF No. 35. Both indictments provided
20 notice of the United States' intention to seek forfeiture of the Stuart Street residence,
21 along with \$152,641.00 U.S. Currency, a firearm, and ammunition.
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1 Sale of Subject Residence and Seized Funds

2 28. On or about April 26, 2023, the United States learned that the Stuart
3 Street residence was under contract to be sold by Zamora and Jasmine Equihua for
4 \$389,000.
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6 29. As detailed herein in paragraphs 18 to 22, Zamora and his wife purchased
7 the Stuart Street residence during a time when he was known to receive substantial
8 proceeds from selling large quantities of illegal narcotics. It is reasonable to infer that
9 the money Zamora acquired through selling large quantities of illegal narcotics was
10 used to purchase the Stuart Street residence.
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13 30. On May 19, 2023, the FBI executed a federal seizure warrant on Valley
14 Title Guarantee, Inc., Escrow File # 257284, and seized the net proceeds in the
15 amount of \$6,710.87 from the sale of the Stuart Street residence. As described herein,
16 the residence was purchased during the time Zamora was engaged in drug trafficking
17 and he lacked any legitimate income during that time. As such, the \$6,710.87
18 representing the net proceeds from the sale of the residence constitute proceeds
19 derived from violations of 21 U.S.C. § 841 and/or represents property facilitating
20 violations of 21 U.S.C. § 841 and is therefore subject to forfeiture pursuant to 21
21 U.S.C. § 881.
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25 VI. CONCLUSION

26 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that the Clerk of the Court issue a warrant for
27 the arrest of the Defendant property; that notice of this action be given to all persons
28
VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE *IN REM*

1 who reasonably appear to be potential claimants of interests in the property; that the
2 Defendant property be forfeited and condemned to the United States of America; that
3 Plaintiff be awarded its costs and disbursements in this action and for such other and
4 further relief as this Court deems proper and just.
5

6 DATED this 26th day of July 2023.

7
8 Vanessa R. Waldref
9 United States Attorney

10 s/ Brian M. Donovan

11 Brian M. Donovan
12 Assistant United States Attorney
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15 VERIFICATION

16 I, Ronald T. Ribail, hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that I am
17 a Task Force Office with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, currently assigned to the
18 Seattle, Washington Division, Yakima Resident agency, that I have read the foregoing
19 Verified Complaint *in rem* and know the contents thereof, and that the matters
20 contained in the Verified Complaint are true to my own knowledge, except those
21 matters herein stated to be alleged on information and belief, and as to those matters I
22 believe them to be true.
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25 The sources of my knowledge and information and the grounds of my belief are
26 the official files and records of the United States and information supplied to me by
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28

1 other law enforcement officers, as well as my investigation of this case, together with
2 others, as a Special Agent.

3
4 I hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing
5 information is true and correct.

6 DATED this 20th day of June 2023.

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10 _____
11 Ronald T. Ribail, Task Force Officer
12 Federal Bureau of Investigation
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